

President Draws 59% of Vote in Landslide

By JACK NELSON, *Times Washington Bureau Chief*

President Reagan, who had asked the nation for a mandate to continue his conservative agenda, Tuesday swept to a landslide reelection victory that represented a monumental personal triumph and offered him the potential for a stronger hand with Congress in his second term.

With Americans turning out to vote in about the same proportions as they did four years ago, late returns and exit polls showed the 73-year-old President routing Democratic nominee Walter F. Mondale in all regions of the country and among almost every category of voters except blacks, Jews and Latinos.

The President was polling 59% of the popular vote. And, with Mondale leading only in Minnesota and definitely carrying only the District of Columbia for a possible total of 13 electoral votes, Reagan seemed certain to score one of the most lopsided victories of the 50 presidential elections this country has held.

Biggest Since 1936

If those projections stood firm, Reagan would have inflicted the worst defeat on a presidential opponent since Republican Alfred M. Landon was beaten by Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936. Roosevelt won the popular vote by 61% to 37% and won in the electoral college by 523 to 8.

In more recent times, the only comparable landslide was recorded by President Richard M. Nixon in 1972 when he won 520 electoral votes to 17 electoral votes for Democratic challenger George S. McGovern.

A beaming Reagan appeared with his wife, Nancy, at 9:30 p.m. at a victory rally at the Century Plaza Hotel, where a flag-waving crowd chanted: "Four more years!" The President quipped: "I think that's just been arranged."

Reagan said his reelection was a continuation of a "prairie fire" that

Election Returns

President	94% Counted		Electoral vote
	Popular Vote	Percent	
Reagan R	59,089,256	59%	525
Mondale D	34,701,998	41%	3

Prop. 36, Tax (Jarvis)

68 % Precincts Reporting

	Vote	Percent
Yes	2,629,451	45 %
No	3,241,331	55 %

Prop. 37, Lottery

68 % Precincts Reporting

	Vote	Percent
Yes	3,553,334	58 %
No	2,563,323	42 %

Prop. 39, Reapportionment

68 % Precincts Reporting

	Vote	Percent
Yes	2,682,057	46 %
No	3,172,296	54 %

Prop. 40, Campaign Funds

68 % Precincts Reporting

	Vote	Percent
Yes	2,084,038	36 %
No	3,660,677	64 %

Prop. 41, Welfare

68 % Precincts Reporting

	Vote	Percent
Yes	2,131,004	37 %
No	3,630,233	63 %

he said had started with the launching of his political career in California 18 years ago—what he called the "fire of hope to keep alive the promise of opportunity that will continue into the next

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century."

"Our society is a society of unlimited opportunity," he said. "We fought many years for our principles. Now we will work to keep those principles in practice. Let's keep that prairie fire alive."

Reagan and Vice President George Bush had campaigned on a theme of strong and competent leadership, and Los Angeles Times exit polling showed that voters in large numbers accepted that assessment of their stewardship, especially when compared to Mondale. Voters also judged Reagan substantially better equipped than former Vice President Mondale to handle the economy and foreign affairs, *The Times poll found*.

So clear-cut was the choice perceived to be in this year's election that 44% of the voters surveyed by The Times exit poll said they had made up their minds on whom to support as early as last February, months before the Democrats had even chosen their standard-bearer. And, of those who decided so early, Reagan was the choice by a 2-1 margin.

Little Shifting

Moreover, the poll found, there was relatively little shifting of voter sentiment in the closing days and weeks of the campaign, despite the dramatic presidential debates.

Although his victory assures Reagan of somewhat greater strength for his programs on Capitol Hill, especially in the early months of his second term, the election was more of a personal triumph for the President himself than a ringing endorsement of the Republican Party.

Despite the scope of Reagan's sweep, he turned out to have relatively short coattails. Republicans did manage to retain control of the Senate, though they suffered a small net loss. Similarly, in the House, Republicans appeared to be gaining about 17 to 22 seats and strengthening their prospects for an alliance with conservative Democrats on some issues, but the GOP fell short of the 26-seat gain needed to re-establish the working coalition that it had in the first two years of Reagan's presidency.

Those results could become a potentially serious problem for Reagan as he plans his second-term congressional agenda, especially as the election-night glow fades and the struggle for succession begins within the President's party.

Tuesday's outcome was never in doubt. CBS projected Reagan as the winner by 5 p.m. PST, three hours before West Coast polls closed. At that time, CBS reported, Reagan was assured of 280 electoral votes—10 more than needed to win—and Mondale could claim only the District of Columbia.

At 8:20 p.m. Mondale made a bittersweet concession statement at a flag-waving rally in the St. Paul (Minn.) Civic Center. Reagan "is our President and we honor him tonight," Mondale declared, but he added that the poor, the unem-

ployed, the elderly and the handicapped whom he had championed throughout his campaign would need the help of his supporters more than ever.

Although clearly dejected by the size of his defeat, Mondale said he was "at peace with the knowledge that I gave it everything I've got." He said he had telephoned Reagan in Los Angeles a few minutes before the concession statement to congratulate him on the victory.

Mondale began drawing up his concession speech long before the West Coast polls closed, but he had made a pre-election pledge not to follow the 1980 example of President Jimmy Carter, who conceded defeat before all polls were closed. Some Democrats severely criticized Carter for making the early concession, declaring that it discouraged Democratic voters from going to the polls and affected the outcome of several Western races.

It was the second time Mondale had been buried beneath a Reagan landslide, and this one appeared to be shaping up as even larger than the one in 1980, when Reagan defeated Carter and then-Vice President Mondale by 489 electoral votes to 49. CBS projections showed that Mondale had carried only the District of Columbia, with a chance of carrying only one state, Minnesota, with 10 electoral votes.

Exit polls showed that Republicans and independents voted overwhelmingly for Reagan and that he got more than 16% of the Democratic vote.

Nothing seemed to work for Mondale. And exit polls indicated that two of his most crucial campaign decisions—the selection of Rep. Geraldine A. Ferraro of New

York as his running mate and the announcement that he would raise taxes to lower the budget deficit—not only did not help him, but probably hurt him.

The Democratic nominee was polling only about 33% of the white vote nationwide and, in some places in the South, white Democrats defected in droves. A CBS exit poll indicated that Reagan won 86% of the white vote in predominantly black Atlanta.

Mondale had taken a calculated gamble at the Democratic convention by saying that it would be necessary to raise taxes next year to lower the deficit and that he would do so openly, while charging that Reagan had a secret plan for raising taxes but would not disclose it.

Tax Hike Plan Denied

Reagan emphatically denied any plan to raise taxes, and the American people apparently believed him.

Mondale had also counted on a vaulted Democratic registration drive to add new voters and help him at the polls. But Republicans launched a drive of their own, and The Times poll indicated newly registered voters broke for Reagan 61% to 39%.

The Democrats, with the AFL-CIO working vigorously for Mondale after breaking precedent and supporting him even before he won the Democratic nomination, also had banked on strong backing at the polls from union voters. But Mondale wound up getting only about 55% of the vote—considerably less than strategists said he would need to have a chance at an upset.

Reagan, who began the campaign with an exceptionally strong base in the West and South, focused much of his attention after Labor Day on the Midwest and Northeast, regions that were considered the Democratic nominee's natural base. He campaigned before large, carefully controlled crowds and remained largely inaccessible to the press, never spelling out exactly what he would do in a second term.

Mondale remained far behind Reagan in public opinion polls except for a brief period immediately after the Democratic convention in July, when he seemed to close the gap. He campaigned extensively throughout the country, trying desperately to make a breakthrough in Reagan's base. The President's political strategists said they were dumbfounded that Mondale had failed to try to solidify what should have been his own base before spending so much time in the West and South.

But it is doubtful that any strategy would have helped Mondale significantly. Peace and prosperity and a popular President apparently would have been an almost unbeatable combination for any Democrat, regardless of tactics.